

Biography



Dr. France A. Córdoba
Director
National Science Foundation

Photo by NSF/Stephen Voss

France A. Córdoba is an astrophysicist and the 14th director of the National Science Foundation (NSF), the only government agency charged with advancing all fields of scientific discovery, technological innovation, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. NSF is a \$7.5 billion independent federal agency; its programs and initiatives keep the United States at the forefront of science and engineering, empower future generations of scientists and engineers, and foster U.S. prosperity and global leadership.

Córdoba is president emerita of Purdue University, and chancellor emerita of the University of California, Riverside, where she was a distinguished professor of physics and astronomy. Córdoba was the vice chancellor for research and professor of physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Previously, Córdoba served as NASA's chief scientist. Prior to joining NASA, she was on the faculty of the Pennsylvania State University where she headed the department of astronomy and astrophysics. Córdoba was also deputy group leader in the Earth and space sciences division at Los Alamos National Laboratory. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Stanford University and her doctorate in physics from the California Institute of Technology.

More recently, Córdoba served as chair of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution and on the board of trustees of Mayo Clinic. She also served as a member of the National Science Board (NSB), where she chaired the Committee on Strategy and Budget. As NSF director, she is an ex officio member of the NSB.

Córdoba's scientific contributions have been in the areas of observational and experimental astrophysics, multi-spectral research on x-ray and gamma ray sources and space-borne instrumentation. She has published more than 150 scientific papers. She has been awarded several honorary doctorates, including ones from Purdue and Duke Universities. She is a recipient of NASA's highest honor, the Distinguished Service Medal, and was recognized as a Kilby Laureate. The Kilby International Awards recognize extraordinary individuals who have made "significant contributions to society through science, technology, innovation, invention and education." Córdoba was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and is a National Associate of the National Academies. She is also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Association for Women in Science (AWIS).

Córdoba is married to Christian J. Foster, a science educator, and they have two adult children.

